

Western Tanager



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MONTHLY BIRD COUNTS

Man, in his progress, continues to change the face of the earth and consequently affects the environment of other living creatures. The birds endeavor to adjust themselves, resulting in some species expanding, some holding their own and a few dying out. Some of us diligently take an annual Christmas bird census and promptly forget about it for another year. But what is happening to the bird population in our absence? What do we know of the seasonal change of species in our territory, and most important of all, did the nesting birds have a successful season?

Any of us may make an interesting and worthwhile study by choosing a territory close to home and taking a monthly count regularly. These counts, over a period of time, will serve as a unit of measurement, giving a good indication of the number of individuals to be found there. I have chosen the U.C.L.A. Campus as my territory and have been fortunate in having received a summary of bird observations for a 14 year period kept by Dr. Loye H. Miller, professor-emeritus of biology of that university. Dr. Miller says that when the school first encroached on this open land, a prairie falcon hunted there, but the noise and tumult of civilization have sent him away. Then, horned larks twittered in the fields, but now, they too have gone. Song sparrows have increased steadily and have moved into the shrubbery about the buildings; and with the proper planting, wrentits have come down from the hills. A horned owl has adapted itself to the change and moved into a city apartment in one of the great towers of Royce Hall and when the light is right and the carillon sounds the hour, it can be seen stretching and shuffling about.

Of course, all territories will not contain horned owl nor prairie falcon habitats, but common birds can be interesting, too. For instance, the black phoebe is a resident on the campus, but strangely, nests but sparingly there. Cliff swallows nest in the vicinity, but not on the campus. The hooded oriole nests there, but there has been no record of the Bullock. It rained on the day the January count was taken, and in a freshly ploughed strip, 383 mourning doves were feeding. In February, this loose ground had been beaten down by the rains and only 7 mourning doves were noted on the whole campus. It will be interesting to learn what a series of regular observations will disclose.

---Dorothy E. Groner

LET US CONTINUE A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT. Every Saturday this year our Society has had one or two hostesses in the bird gallery of the County Museum. The seventeen who have cooperated in this have contacted over 260 people. This includes adults, college and church groups and many boy and girl Scout groups. Informal talks have been given to several Scout groups. This is fine publicity for our society and actually brings in new members as well as being a wonderful piece of work for the children who need it most. Those individual enthusiastic and wide awake youngsters who have expressed their gratefulness for the help given them in their various bird projects and merit badge study alone have made the whole program worthwhile. It is hoped that more members who can assist with this work will phone Mrs. Lewis at GRanite 0444.

THE WESTERN Tanager

Published monthly except during the summer by THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY Editor.....Mrs. Wm. T. Shelford 3315 W. 41st St. Los Angeles 43

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

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OFFICERS

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GIFTS to our society include: 7 mounted birds from Mrs. Mary V. Hood. A subscription to "Canadian Nature" from Miss Georgie Ware. "Journey of a Naturalist" from Mrs. E. H. Nicolas. A cactus wren's nest in giant yucca from Mrs. T. R. Shearer. A collection of 60 mounted birds in cases from Mr. Fred Weigel, formerly of St. Louis, Mo. 44 pictures from the collection of the late Dr. Henry Smith Williams. All these will be on display at our headquarters and well worth a special trip to see. Mrs. Harlan Eckler has added 20 additional slides to her former gift of 101.

HEADQUARTERS

Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46. From down-town Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd.-West Hollywood car, Subway Terminal; get off at Fuller Ave. walk one block west to park entrance.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual, \$1.50, Sustaining, \$5 annually; Life, \$25; Patron \$100. Fiscal year ends June 30.

APRIL CALENDAR

FIELD TRIP - Thursday, April 6, 1944: Stone Canyon - Meline and Miller Estates with picnic lunch (each person bringing own lunch) at Miller Residence grounds, 10659 Bellagio Road, Bel Air, at 12 o'clock. Take Special Sunset Bus at Subway Terminal Bldg., 423 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, at 8:45 A.M. Get off at Stone Canyon Road. Leaders will meet Special Bus and Bird walks will start from Stone Canyon Road and Sunset Blvd., at 9:30. Those along the way may board the Special Bus at Beverly and Vermont at 8:56 - Beverly & Western at 9:00 and Santa Monica & Canyon Drive at 9:18. Special Bus will leave Stone Canyon Road & Sunset Blvd., returning, at 3:00 o'clock. Those planning to take Bus will PLEASE be sure to make reservations with Mrs. W. F. Willis, 4759 Ambrose Ave., Los Angeles 27, Telephone MO 1-6350, not later than April 4th, so that both our hostess, Mrs. Miller, and the Pacific Electric Ry. can make the necessary arrangements. Round trip fare 40¢.

SUNDAY FIELD TRIP - April 9, - San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary. Walk will start from entrance 2578 Durfee Road at 9 a.m. Take Pasadena-Jak Knoll car at P.E. station, 6th and Main Sts. at 7:32 a.m., get off at La Senda station and walk one block east and take Pasadena to Long Beach bus going south across Huntington Drive at Atlantic, arriving at sanctuary at 8:43. Fare one way 35¢.

EVENING STUDY MEETING - April 13, - 7 p.m., Main Lecture hall, Los Angeles Public Library, 5th & Olive Sts. Warblers will be the subject for discussion, and Mr. Guy C. Caldwell will give an illustrated talk. Those who have heard Mr. Caldwell speak and whistle bird calls will not need a second reminder to attend.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT:

Spring ever recurring is each year as new as though it were the first in our experience; something which we anticipate with eagerness and look back upon with lingering pleasure. Yellow spreads of mustard on hillsides, delicate greens of whispering new leaves, freshness of buoyant spring winds - in a thousand ways she fills us anew with zest for life and with courage for the future.

A Bird Motif.

"Just a handful of bird notes

Some tipped with gold and some of silver sheen

Some light and airy, joy and cheer mixed in between

"Tis done-- a linnet's song.

--Erna Comby

April Calendar - continued.

BOARD MEETING - Tuesday, April 18, at the home of Mrs. J. H. Comby.

PROGRAM MEETING - Thursday, April 20 - 1:30 p.m. L.A. County Museum, Exposition Park. With deserts and valleys carpeted in gay colors which most of us will be unable to see this year, a talk on flowers will be most welcome and timely. DOROTHY DEAN SHELDON will give an illustrated lecture on "Desert Wildflowers and Birds." Dr. George M. Stratton, of U. of C; says, "Mrs. Sheldon's pictures and comments are delightful. Lifelong Californian that I am, I'm amazed at the wealth of rare things all about me that I'd never noticed or admired, and which she brings livingly before one." There will also be a short nature quiz by Mr. W. Scott Lewis. Share this program with a friend.

SUNDAY FIELD TRIP - April 23. Location to be decided at April 13 evening meeting.

STUDY CLASSES - Thursday April 27 - Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. 10 a.m.: Mr. W. Scott Lewis has kindly consented to give his illustrated lecture, "The Elfin Forests of California." Following this, Mrs. Thos. R. Shearer will recount her observations of birds of the elfin forest, particularly those which visit the Alma Stultz Bird Sanctuary.

WHILE walking around the Rain-bow at Long Beach on the sunny day of January 11, 1942, a ring-bill gull who fed in the shallow water drew my attention. The gull stirred up the sandy, muddy bed of the bay, first with one foot, then with the other. In this manner he dislodged worms and insects that lived in the sandy mud. These the gull eagerly captured by jabbing dextrously here and there with his bill. When one catch had been bagged the gull deliberately stirred up another and again fed with enthusiasm. This mode of fishing seemed highly successful.

Presently a young Glaucus-wing gull approached the Ring-bill and being of larger size, easily shouldered him out of the way. "Well, well," thought I, "is Glaucus-wing wise to this new feeding trick?" No sooner thought than demonstrated, for there was Glaucus-wing fairly dancing up and down on his strong rose-red feet and legs. This action stirred up a veritable cloud of bits of animal life. Not far distant, a second Glaucus-wing was also dancing about as though stepping on hot ashes and thereby reaping a harvest.

Through the years Charles and I have observed the gulls whenever opportunity offered and he had never seen this new feeding trick used by them before. Reflecting thus as I strolled alone my attention was next claimed by a Snowy egret who is past master at the mud scratching art. He stepped cautiously along as though walking on egg shells as he delicately stirred the sandy mud. This method procured a good meal.

"Had the gulls learned this trick from the Snowy egret? Why not? Its advantages are plain to see." I reflected, "and the gulls are resourceful birds."

---Enid Michael

THE ARTICLE by Mrs. Lewis on the music of hummingbirds makes me want to submit what I like to believe, and to start with I declare hummingbirds are really songful. They sing with their throats; they sing with their wings; they sing with their tails, they sing with color.

Last March, while cutting blossoms from my flowering quince, a male Anna not more than two feet from my ear gave me really sweet notes. First came the tzzz, tzzz, tzzz usually in threes, sounding a bit like the click of empty scissors, then a clear whistled two or three note pattern within my whistling range and with a drop of more than an octave from the first to the second note. It was remarkably clear in tone. A real song! The same thing was given over and over so that I heard at least twenty repetitions. This is my only record of this performance from any hummer. So people who see hummers that look as though they were singing, but do not hear a song, may be just too far away.

Maybe hummingbirds and other birds sing at so high a level we do not hear them. I am skeptical. I argue this way. Our hearing runs up to 20,000 variations per second. Some of us go even higher. The top C on the normal piano is 4096. The top note I hear from birds is very little above that. To me, golden-crowned kinglets and horned larks produce the highest whistled notes. Up to about 7,000 vibrations. I can whistle with them up to this level. Pipe organs can play up to 8,192. I heard these high notes at Salt Lake City last December and my memory of the matter is that birds are not singing so high. Of course such hissing sounds as hummers and other birds give are high, but not too high. We hear them, so I remain skeptical. Let's get together one hundred years from now to settle the matter. But please bring a glass of water for me when you come!

You know the pleasant whir of the wings of hummingbirds in flight. It is music of a sort well known to quail, grouse, doves, ducks and others, but did you know about the music of vibrating tail feathers? I have heard it several times and all my records are from male Allen hummingbirds. First the buzz, buzz, buzz back and forth before the female, either real or imaginary; then the towering flight way up; then the pause for stage effect, and the power dive. It is remarkable that a tenth of an ounce or so can descend so rapidly. At about fifteen feet from the object stimulating this display brakes need to be applied. Body, wings and tail are used. The body is thrown against the line of flight; the wings go into reverse while the tail is spread and depressed. Here the rush of air through the tiny feathers of the tail produce a sound I have heard at thirty feet. It is a definitely musical sound at about the level of that certain A produced by vibrations of 3,520 per second. Dr. Grinnell once thought this important enough to allow it as a research problem at the university. I heard the report on it at Cooper Club.

Music is not all just in sound. There is a music in color. Man has tried to capture some of it in the Color Organ. I have paid admission to "hear" such a concert. What lovely rhythms there are in the feather patterns of birds, especially the gorget of a hummingbird which is a diminutive symphony! Then set these colors into vibrations as a male hummer does in his metronomic displays, and if you are in tune enough to understand it at all you will know you are being treated to one of the rarest bits of music of the out-of-doors!

-- C. A. Harwell, California Representative.

MRS. MARY V. HOOD will speak at the County Museum, Exposition Park on Sunday, April 16 at 3 p.m. Her subject will be "Unknown California," a general nature talk.

ANYONE wishing to contribute suitable shrubs for the Memory Garden at headquarters is invited to bring or send them to Plummer Park.
